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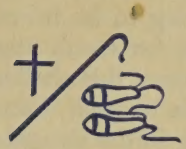

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The Church on the Move...

WHY is the Church here?

Is there a compelling call on which it must act now?

In the world today there are many voices crying to be heard. They challenge the Christian Church. They are calling for men's allegiance, competing for their faith, raising their hopes. To meet this challenge the Church must be on the move. It must get outside of itself, become involved in the world with every Christian engaging in the struggle.

What is the Mission of the Church?

A certain church on the West Coast began to study its program. It called together a group of responsible members. As they discussed and tested the worth of all that they were doing they came to see that the real reason for a church's existence is to carry out a mission in the world. The Church was put here by God to make an impact on the world, not just to keep its own wheels in motion. These members began to examine their church life closely from this point of view—the worship services, the programs of the various age groups, the budget, the activities that consumed so much of time and effort. Was each one effective in the central task of mission? Because of this study some activities were dropped, others were changed, still others were continued just as they had been. As that church got on the move it found its whole life transformed. It saw new tasks to be done and saw old tasks in a new perspective.

There are many Christians in America, Europe, Asia, and other parts of the world who are discovering that it is not enough for people to come to church, the Church must go to the world. The institution is recovering its mission, which is to reach out in love to all men making Christ known as Savior and Lord. The minor concern of self-service is being replaced by a major concern for outreach.

In France, church men have united to form Protestant professional associations. These are groups of farmers, of doctors, of lawyers, who seek to bring their work into line with the mind and purpose of Christ, and to make Him known to their fellow workers.

THE 1953 — 1954 EMPHASIS

In the following pages are some fundamental questions concerning the purpose of the Church. To make possible a consideration of these questions, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. has set up a coordinated program emphasis for 1953-54.

The Emphasis theme is: "Christ Calls to Mission and Unity — What Must the Churches Do?" During these two years the ideas centering in "Mission" and "Unity" will be lifted up in denominational and interdenominational programs.

This pamphlet is an introduction to these ideas. For deeper study the reader is referred to the study materials and program suggestions listed on the final pages.

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In America, in a local council of church women, the wife of a leading company executive joined with the other members to attack an urgent problem. Her husband owned 1200 acres of cherry trees and three canneries. She rose to speak against the tensions existing between the residents of the community and the incoming migrant workers. "Prejudice goes with fear and guilty consciences," she said bluntly. "What are we going to do about it?"

The Batak Church in Indonesia, one of the recent creations of missionary work, has been growing tremendously through the effective work of laymen going out to witness. In ten years it has added 150,000 members, even though its missionaries, being Germans, were removed by the government in 1940.

These are not just isolated examples. They are part of a movement stirring throughout the world-wide church as it engages a world in revolution. If it is to meet the demands of the day, then the church must move —outside of its own life and beyond its accustomed circles.

What is Holding Us Back?

There are obstacles to overcome.

One of these is self-centeredness. Too often our eyes are glued on our own institutional life and program. We are creating a lot of motion, but are we moving anywhere? Is your church enjoying a static life, "at ease in Zion?" Does it see its task primarily as maintaining an establishment, expressing a perpetual concern for the building, the new organ, the remodeled kitchen, the Sunday School picnic? Even the means of grace can become a prison. Things like our concern for worship and theology can imprison the church so that it never gets outside of itself. There is little hope for being on the move when life is self-centered.

Another obstacle is seen in the Church's isolation from the world. The Church cannot move unless it leaves the balcony of seclusion and security and gets down on the road where action is possible. Our Lord never isolated Himself from the world He lived in. He was always down on the road mingling with publicans and sinners. When He did draw apart to a secret place it was always to gain strength that He might return to serve the sick and the sinful.

The churches must confess that they have often passed by on the other side, while the unbeliever, moved by compassion, did what the churches ought to have done. Where the Church overcomes its isolation, there it identifies itself with the world in real acts of love and justice. The church that is thus involved in the world will soon begin to recover its mission. It will speak and act in a way that the world can understand—words and

deeds for uplifting hopeless men and sobering the proud and self-confident, for the healing of racial tensions, for the building of responsible government and world community. Christians must never forget that Christ was crucified *for the world.*

The very heart of the church's life must be in the mission it bears to the world. The church which is under obedience to its Lord will not merely add a mission to its other activities (in which case its mission will be a failure) but will be an outgoing fellowship in all its life. Each church organization will reach out in all possible ways, touching people of the local community, making an impact on the great questions of national affairs, and witnessing in specific areas across the world. The worship of such a church is not alone a time when people come apart from the world for quietness and spiritual refreshment. It is more often a time when God, who is the Lord of the world, the Lord of politics and economics, of distant lands and near, is worshipped by that committed company engaged in turning the world upside down and right side up.

Who is Involved?

Everyone is involved. Every Christian is a missionary.

In the early Church there were not many full time ministers or preachers. But there were scores of fishermen, craftsmen, merchants and slaves who became involved in the Church's life. They witnessed right where they were. Things began to happen in cities like Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth and Rome because of this personal involvement.

The Church today can find new strength where the Church of the first century found it. As it moves out across the world, and into every area of the world's life, every Christian must take part in the struggle. No one can escape. When one becomes a member of the Church he is not "joining" an institution, he is enlisting in a missionary society. He who has met the Lord must introduce Him. He who has heard the good news must tell it. Our mission is not something to be deduced from certain propositions about faith; it is a spontaneous response.

The Indian converts led by Bishop Azariah would each place his hand on his head and say, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." In America a similar response is found among young people in work camp projects. One group spent two months in a tenement section in New York City. Each paid $135.00 plus his own transportation. They spent four hours each day in manual labor, taught in a vacation church school, and in the evening took part in Bible study and discussions.

Of course everyone will not enlist in the same way. But wherever it may be, the task is one. A failure at any point means a slowing up all along the line. A missionary preaching in Africa is told to go home and rectify racial antagonisms among his own people before preaching to others. Those who are working for a better America begin to realize, as missionary leaders have been saying for a century, that it matters intensely for America what people in distant lands believe. No area of the mission can succeed unless it is carried on within a pattern that works for the evangelism of the world. The false distinction between pastor and layman, between "religious" and "secular" work is gone. Daily work on farm or in factory receives a new value, for through it the Church is reaching out among people every day of the week. We see all our work as a part of God's missionary plan.

How Can the Churches Fulfill this Mission in Unity?

In Youngstown, Ohio, the churches decided to move out *together* to present the claims of the Gospel to those outside. They launched a city-wide program of visitation evangelism. Over one hundred local congregations, representing fifteen denominations, participated. After a week of visiting in the homes of that city 936 new members were brought into the Church.

Closely bound up with the belief that the Church must be on the move, and that everyone must be involved, is the conviction that we must move as one. Perhaps one of the reasons that we have not worked together more effectively is that we have viewed the subject in the wrong perspective. We have regarded unity as an end in itself, as a goal to be achieved. But unity is rather something to be used for the greater purpose of mission. Our Lord prayed, "That they all may be one . . . *that* the world may believe." As we go forward in our mission we shall move nearer to one another.

Christ is not divided. In writing to the Christians at Corinth, Paul said, "I do beg you, my brothers, by all that Christ means to you, to speak with one voice and not allow yourselves to be split up into parties. All together you should be achieving a unity in thought and in judgment. I know . . . that you are each making different claims: 'I am one of Paul's men,' says one; 'I am one of Apollos,' says another; or, 'I am one of Cephas'. (Should we insert the names of our present divisions?) . . . What are you saying? Is there more than one Christ?"

—Phillip's translation.

"If we believe this is one world, and that it is God's world, then His mission is one also, and demands the unity of those engaged in it."

What Is the Hope of Our Mission?

As we move out in mission we meet a troubled world. Other faiths confront us which have won swift and sweeping victories. Men's hearts are failing them for fear of things coming on the earth. But despite all, the assurance comes to us: "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." The word of the Gospel in this hour is not one of retreat, but one of advance; not one of despair, but one of hope. Our cause cannot fail!

In our day this Christian hope is all too often displaced as men give their final allegiance to lesser hopes. In most people there is a dream of something like the Kingdom of God, or the haunting longing for an earthly paradise. Millions who scratch a precarious living from the soil, or are victims of humiliating racial laws, find their hope in Communism. We have no difficulty in seeing the illusory nature of that hope, but there are others which more easily beguile us. There are many who have benefitted from scientific achievement who are led to worship the scientific method. They feel confident that science will indeed build the city beautiful. Many persons, particularly in America, see in democracy the only ground for hope. There can even be a worship of "the American way of life."

In different ways these all prove wanting. They are finite hopes, bound up in man and whenever man fails they fail. They glory in something other than the cross of Christ. The hope for which the world waits, the treasure for which it searches, is found within the Church. It must not be left there. The Church must move out to share it with the world.

There is a confident assurance in our mission, a hope that we must proclaim. God is at work in His world. He is its final ruler. There are forces of evil which may struggle fiercely for a time in proud rebellion, but their doom is sealed. In Christ the decisive battle against them has already been won. Christ *is* King, and in the end He will be the Lord of all. To this final fulfillment we look forward with eager anticipation. As the Church is on the move, its mood is not one of desperate striving or grim determination, but of joyous abandon in a cause that cannot fail.

"When all things are shaken, when familiar landmarks are blotted out, when war and tumult engulf us, when all human pride and pretension are humbled, we proclaim anew the hidden reign of our crucified and risen Lord. We summon all Christians to come forth from securities which are no more secure, and from boundaries of accepted duty too narrow for the Lord of all the earth, and to go forth with fresh assurance to the task of bringing all things into captivity to Him, and of preparing the whole earth for the day of His coming."

PUTTING THESE IDEAS TO WORK

What Can the Individual Church Do?

The Whole Church An Outgoing Fellowship

Arrange for a series of sermons on these ideas using the study materials listed.

The Official Board

Plan an Evaluation Retreat for the officers and boards of the congregation. Use the time for an examination of the whole church program. Is it geared primarily for self-service or outreach? What changes are required?

MEN

Through their program let them make an impact in some specific way on the community, nation, and world. To make this impact needs must be met. The clarity with which the need is known will determine the strength of the impact.

Plan meetings on the church's mission using the study materials Nos. 1 and 2.

Get the men to read such books. Hand out the leaflets Nos. 9-12 on subjects the men are especially interested in.

Apply Christianity to the various vocations, both locally through personal contacts and abroad through Christian representatives.

WOMEN

Have a series of meetings in each of which a woman reports on one of the Willingen or Evanston pamphlets reflecting the thinking of the world church.

Of course, make use of the study materials Nos. 1 and 2 if these are not regularly in the program.

Hold a strategy meeting to discover what the critical needs are in the world around us and in the local community. How can these needs best be met? Let every woman have a share in meeting them.

YOUTH

Make the church youth a band with a mission determined to infiltrate the schools and other youth groups with Christian attitudes and loyalties.

Use the youth study books (No. 3) for programs.

Experiment with ways of winning other young people to participate in the church's mission.

The mission must be shown as challenging, relevant, and at times dangerous.

CHILDREN

Make the Sunday School a focal point for reaching the religiously indifferent of the community. Is it used as such to the best advantage? Is it showing children by example that the church is sent to reach out?

If you have questions or desire further information write to:

NATIONAL COUNCIL EMPHASIS
156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

FURTHER STUDY MATERIALS

GENERAL MATERIALS (Order from any book store or literature headquarters.)

1. **Guide for Adults on The Life and Task of the Church Around the World, Designed for use in studying the special theme for 1953-54, "Christ Calls to Mission and Unity."**
   A study pamphlet for groups or individuals. This sets forth the life and thought of the world church as reflected in the 1953 Program Emphasis and is a guide for discussion and study of the book by C. W. Ranson. (Available in 1953.) 50 cents
2. **That the World May Know, The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity,** by Charles W. Ranson.
   This is the main interdenominational mission study book for 1953-54, and has been written around the Emphasis theme. (Available in 1953.) $1.25
3. Youth Books: **Where'er the Sun,** by Samuel Moffett, and **A Ship Sets Sail,** by Jean Fraser.
   The interdenominational study books for young people. (Available in 1953.) $1.25 each
4. **Pictorial Book**
   A picture book presenting the total mission of the Church.

WILLINGEN STUDIES

5. **Christian World Mission**
   A popular report on the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Willingen, Germany. Here are set forth the significant trends of the Christian World Mission today. 35 cents
6. **The Missionary Obligation of the Church**
   The message and findings of the Willingen Conference in relation to the mission of the Church. 20 cents
7. **The North American Churches and the World Mission**
   Is the task being overtaken? How far do we still have to go? 25 cents

EVANSTON STUDIES

The following five pamphlets have been prepared by the World Council of Churches. They set forth the major issues that will be considered at the Evanston Assembly of the World Council in August, 1954. These studies will give the reader further understanding of the total mission of the church.

8. **The Christian Hope, the Second Report of the Advisory Commission on the Theme of the Evanston Assembly.**
   This describes clearly and concisely the Christian hope for our time and the relation of that hope to the Church's mission. 20 cents
   For those who want to dig deeper at this point there is **Eschatology and Ethics,** a study of the Biblical teachings relating to the "last things," and the significance of these for Christian action. 20 cents
9. **The Mission of the Church to Those Outside Her Life**
   A statement of the evangelistic task of the Church and of modern methods of evangelism. 5 cents
   For those who want further information along this line there is **Evangelism in France** and **Evangelism in India.** 40 cents each
10. **The Christian in His Vocation**
    The mission of the Church in the world as expressed through the occupations of laymen. 5 cents
11. **The Responsible Society In A World Perspective** 5 cents
12. **The Church Amid Racial and Ethnic Tension** 5 cents

There will also be available: A reading drama, a series of worship services, and a series of sermon outlines, expressing the mission and the unity of the Church.

Order all except *General Materials* from the DEPARTMENT OF PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION, National Council of Churches, 120 East 23rd Street, New York 10, N. Y.